

[Interview with Vito Cacciola #56]

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INTERVIEW

WITH

VITO CACCIOLA

BY

Merton R. Lovett

“As well as remembered.”

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(from memory)

“Soon we will catch de eels, Mr. Lovett. This hot weather will melta them.

“I spota some worms in Peter's garden. They is where he has plant-ed de tomatoes. Has you got a de fishline ready?

“See, here isa my line. It is strong. You cannot breaka it. I hava also de extra hooks. Sometimes de eel is a greedy. He swallows de hook deepa down in de belly. Then it is more easy to leava it there.

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Would you mind, Mr. Lovett, if I taka de passenger? He is nam-ed Luigi. He is de fisherman of desperiance.

"Sure, he maka many long voyages for fish. He knowa all de tricks. One time he catch-ed de shark.

"In course you does not wanta to fool with de shark. If you does Luigi will keepa you safe. He killa it quick. He staba him so with de long knife, so.

"I am sure you never geta chas-ed by de shark in Bailey's pond?

"What, only by trouts which persue your boat with threats? I do not believe trouts is dangerous. I thinka you maka de joke.

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"Your friend tella you that once he catch-ed a trout so long. Hah, hah, hah! He hava fun with you.

"This friend also catch-ed de eels with rat trap? How does he doa that?

"Oh, my! De rat trap breaka de eel's neck. Then you pulla de trap up with string. Why does he doa that? It sounda complicated.

"Hah, hah! I can holda de eel in my hand. I puta my fingers around his neck so. He cannot twista. He cannot squirma. Never does one escapa Vito.

"Sure, I catcha eels in Sicily. They grows mucha big there. One time neara my village such an eel swallows de anchor of ship. By jingo, it is terrible. He catcha de ship. It cannot geta away.

"Believa you me, it was de truth. From de beach many sees it. Thisa eel is bigga as tree and longer as Roundy Street. He is no long that he twista twice around de ship.

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"De sailors puta up de sails. They trya to escape. De wind pusha de ship, but de eel pusha harda. De boat saila backward. De peoples on land praya and weepa.

"No, they escapa at last. It is de miracle. De priest marcha to de water with de big cross. He calla on God to defeata that devil. Pretty soon de good Lord wina.

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"Oh, de giant eel, unwinds himself from ship. He bumpa de ocean and maka great waves. He maka noise lika thunder, so loud that everybodys falla down. From his mouth he spita de ships anchor so hard that it falla on de Mayor's castle. It smasha de roof. Then de sailors pulla de rope of anchor and geta to shore. It is marvelous.

"So you handa it to me? You thinka I tella de champion fish story. But it was nota de lie.

"Did I seea it? No. It happen-ed long time ago. But I seea where de anchor maka hole in de Mayor's roof. I also seea de cross in de cathedral and reada de rescription.

"You thinka you will not fish for eels after all? You has no life insurance. Hah, hah! Leava it to Vito. He will bringa you home safe. I will also cooka our eels with de wine sauce. Excuse me, here coma de customer.

"It is Laura. May you always looka so happy every day.

"Yes, I will fixa them tomorrow. De heels I will maka more low. Gooda bye. Remember me to your mother.

"Does you knowa her, Mr. Lovett?

"No? Did you not reada about her last year in de paper? She [sue?] a in de court Vincent [Vallone?] for twenty thousand, what you calla, smackers.

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"Why, he maka much love to her. He aska her to become his bride. Then he runna away. She sue-ed him for de britches of promise.

"That's what de papers calla it, britches of promise. You laugha? Laura did not laugha. She was mucha hurt-ed and angry.

"Britches? Hah, hah, hah! No, I does not knows what it means. Is it not de word of lawyers?

"Oh, my! Oh, my! It meana same as pants. I blusha, Mr. Lovett.

"In course she does not sue a de crooka for pants. She does not wanta them. If he maka such a present, to her, Laura would slapa his face.

"Perhaps not? Times hava chang-ed? Laura however is de good girl. She senda him to court because he wanta back de ring. It sham-ed her much.

"I'm a sorry. So it was not de britches of promise? What does you calla it? Is it de beaches of promise or de bitches of promise?

"Tella me quick. Why does you laugha some more? You will laugha yourself sick.

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"Oh, my jingo! Perhaps I am not so gooda American scholar as I thinka.

"So bitches is bada girls? My, my!

"Yes, I knowa what beaches is lika. You swima and diga de clams upon them. Please tella to me de word correct.

"Breach of promise. Breach. How does you spella it?

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“B-r-e-a-c-h. B-r-e-a-c-h. What does it mean? It meana breaking de promise the marry. Well, well, well! I guess you is O.K. How does you knowa so much? Does you study de law, Mr. Lovett?

“No, she did not geta twenty thousand dollars. De judge giva to her twelve hundred. It heala her heart which was brok-ed. She is happy some more.

“Now she has de nother sweetheart. He will marry Laura nexta month.

“Believa you me, there will be no more britches — breaches of promise. He lova de twelve hundred dollars too much.”

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